



## COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION  
September 2, 2011

**Contact:** José A. Álvarez (619) 515-6635

### **PREVENTING SUICIDE: QUESTION, PERSUADE AND REFER** *600 Suicide Prevention Gatekeepers Trained to Identify Warning Signs*

Suicide is preventable but no one entity or person can prevent suicide alone.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month, and September 4 through 10 is National Suicide Prevention Week. To commemorate the week, there will be many events taking place throughout the region. Complete list at the It's Up to Us website.

"Preventing suicide is up to all of us; the community as a whole," said Alfredo Aguirre, Director of the County Health and Human Services Agency's (HHSA) Mental Health Services. "Preventing suicide is up to teachers, ministers, doctors, firefighters, neighbors, brothers and sisters, parents, friends, police officers and behavioral health professionals."

Recognizing the warning signs of suicide is key to prevent someone from ending their life. Next week and in November, OptumHealth San Diego and HHSA are partnering with Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) to conduct a series of Question, Persuade and Refer trainings, through which 600 individuals—or suicide prevention gatekeepers—will learn how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, know how to offer hope and where to get help to save a life.

"As a community partner, OptumHealth recognizes that suicide is a major health concern and that through awareness and education we can help prevent suicides and save lives," said Ruth Kenzelmann, Ph.D., Executive Director, OptumHealth San Diego, which operates the County's Access and Crisis Line. "We are proud to support this partnership by providing suicide prevention trainings to the San Diego community during Suicide Prevention Week."

Suicide claims the life of about one San Diegan every day. Last year, 372 suicides were reported in the region.

People think about hurting themselves when they feel hopeless, powerless, or despondent. Most people who attempt or complete a suicide displayed one or more warning signs prior to the suicide attempt.

"The loss of one person to suicide is one too many and we are trying to change that," Aguirre concluded. "Suicide is preventable. There is hope. There is help."

This is the main message of a new Suicide Prevention Action Plan, HHSA will release later this month. The Plan is the result of several meetings and discussions with community groups and mental health stakeholders which met over several months to develop three key strategies to reduce suicide in the region.

The Suicide Prevention Action Plan was created by HHSA in collaboration with Community Health Improvement Partners, mental health service providers, and community members from throughout the region.

This effort is an important component of the County's "*Live Well, San Diego!*" initiative which aims at keeping individuals, families and communities safe and healthy.

People in suicidal danger should call 911. Help is also available by calling the County's Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339 or visiting [www.Up2SD.org](http://www.Up2SD.org).

###